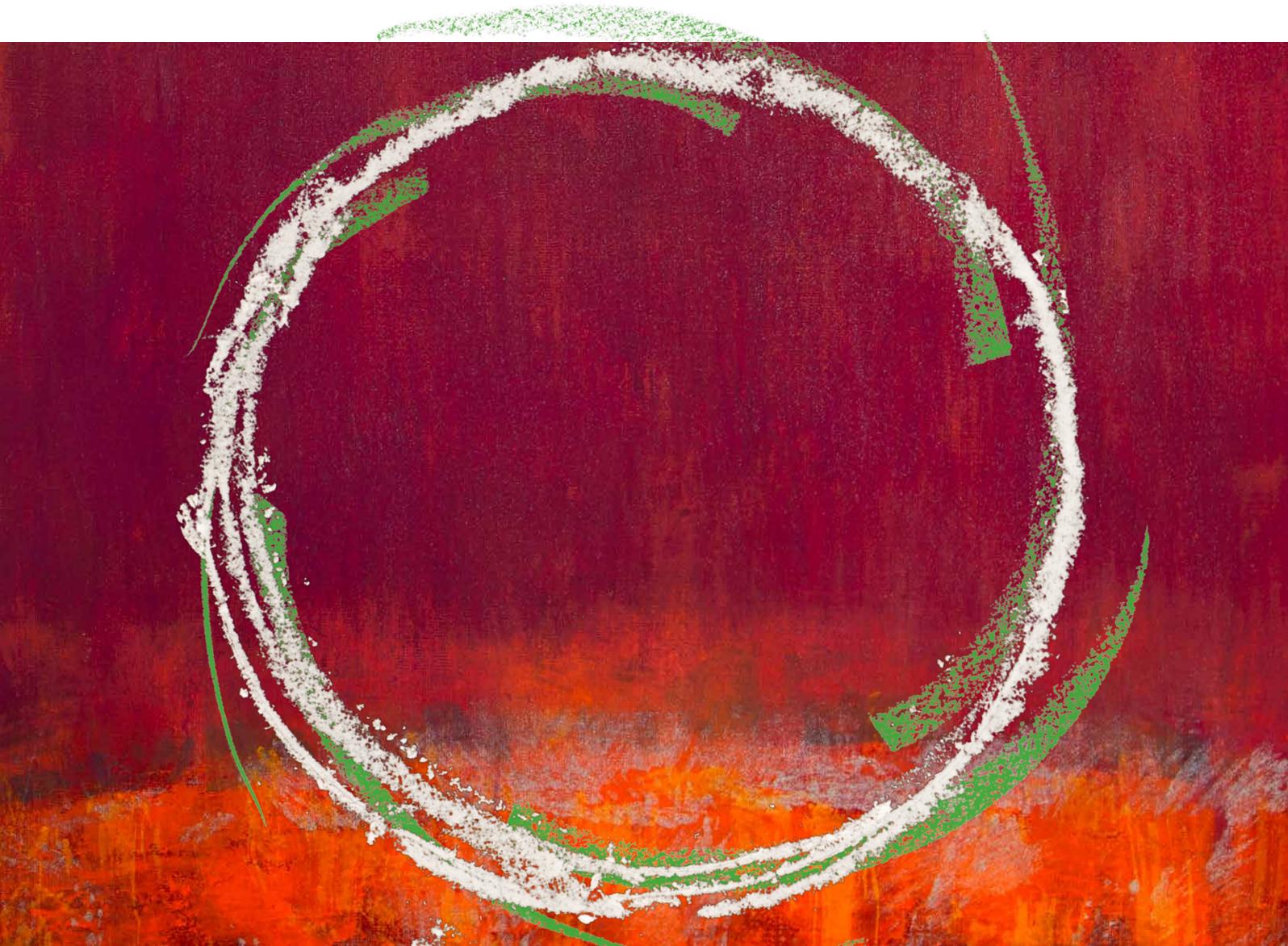




Goetheanum · School of Spiritual Science  
Section for Agriculture  
Section d'Agriculture  
Sección de Agricultura  
Sektion für Landwirtschaft

# Activity Report 2018/19



## Editorial

Agriculture is at the centre of public attention. There is the environmental question: is agriculture harming the climate, or can it become carbon neutral or even climate-friendly? There is the nutrition question: which apple should I eat in order to get the best nourishment but without putting other people at a disadvantage? There is the economic question: what should coffee, avocados and yogurt cost so that all those involved can make a living?

The biodynamic movement in all its facets, spread over approx. 100 countries, tackles these challenges of our time actively – in the micro enterprise in India, at the Heliopolis University in Cairo, in the large viticulture enterprise in Chile, in a food coop in New York, in a research project in a cow byre in Switzerland. The Section for Agriculture wishes to tap into sources of inspiring and courageous commitment for all the people who support these initiatives. Anthroposophy is the source for the biodynamic cultural impulse. It must be rediscovered over and over again. It is the source of the potential for understanding the connections between the human being, the earth and the cosmos in such a way that we can take responsible action as individuals.

The biodynamic movement and the Demeter brand are growing. So it is important for more and more people from all over the world to be able to really experience and explore a deeper level. We are also expanding the resources here in the Glashaus in order to be fit for this task: we have acquired extra support for events and professional groups through Sarah Sommer and André Hach and communication has made great strides with a newsletter and a new website. The next stage is to expand the research side of the Section with a post for a scientist.

*Ueli Hurter*

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## Imprint

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Opening of the Agriculture Conference. Photo: Johannes Onneken



## Agriculture Conference 2019

### Horn manure for the economic sphere

A great deal of substance has flowed into the celebratory and intense mood of the Agricultural Conference, substance which the contributors have gained over years and decades in the real world of agriculture and ECONOMICS. Creating an enterprise, growth crises due to investment needs, upheavals in consumer attitudes and expectations, the challenge of moving to the next generation, etc.: this existential substance was contributed by some and received by others with great openness. This speaking and listening is an extremely intimate and intensive process. We call it practical research and we believe that it gives rise to fundamental material for the annual renewal of the Section's knowledge. Perhaps it can be compared to the cosmic and earthly forces which act in the buried cow horns in winter, when the manure packed into the horn is transformed into horn manure. If the horn manure is stirred and sprayed in spring, this "spiritual manure" can fertilise a very large area.

During the week after the Agricultural Conference many of the participants met again at the organic sector Biofach Trade Fair in Nuremberg. The sector is booming, the exhibition halls were overflowing with visitors, the newest figures were making the rounds: the global organic market has now reached 90 billion euros. At a meeting we talked about the next steps for associative economics in partnering with biodynamic products. One of us anxiously asked the challenging question: can what we have been working on at the Goetheanum influence this large market, just as the horn manure preparation can fertilise a whole field? Could the Goetheanum be like a buried cow horn, where the active life substance is transformed and can then radiate powerfully into the machinery of our civilisation? *Ueli Hurter*

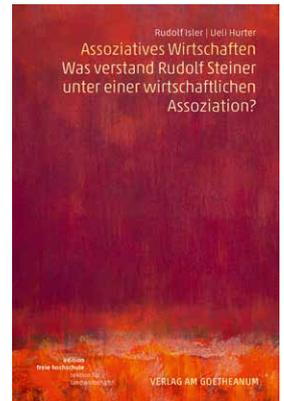
### New publication: Assoziatives Wirtschaften (Associative economics)

#### What did Rudolf Steiner understand by economic association?

By Rudolf Isler and Ueli Hurter  
(The book has only been published in German)

In connection with the Agricultural Conference and based on detailed quotations from the Collected Works, Rudolf Isler studied what Rudolf Steiner understood by economic association and what thoughts he derived from this.

Thanks to a wide range of experience, Ueli Hurter describes what has already been done in the field of associative economics in connection with agriculture and what direction further efforts need to take.



#### Save the Date

### Agriculture Conference 2020

#### The spiritual in agriculture

Annual International Conference of the biodynamic movement  
5th to 8th February 2020 – at the Goetheanum Dornach

Lecture by Ueli Hurter at the Agricultural Conference. Photo: Xue Li



## Biodynamic development research

The first international research conference on biodynamic agriculture took place from 5 to 8 September 2018 at the Goetheanum. Over 180 farmers and scientists from 26 countries met to discuss current research results and projects.

Biodynamic agriculture has combined research and practice from the very beginning. One of the current research projects is focused on improving animal welfare. The separation of the dairy cow from its calf is one of the most upsetting moments. Mechthild Knösel from Rengoldshausen farm (D), Anet Spengler Neff from the FiBl (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture) and Silvia Ivemeyer from Kassel University (D) have been looking for solutions for mother-bonded calf rearing and have developed an approach which has also received enquiries from conventional farmers. Daniel Kusche from Kassel University (D) has demonstrated that untreated milk produced under biodynamic management is more digestible than that from other systems. A field trial in India showed that biodynamic practices sequester more carbon in the soil than other approaches, thereby contributing towards climate protection.

Research being undertaken on farms, in institutes and at universities was reported in 100 contributions. In her report on the conference Dr. Julia Wright, a scientist at Coventry University in Great Britain, wrote: "The programme was uniquely biodynamic and, as with the annual agricultural conference, arguably more creative than contemporary agroecological and organic research conferences". Jean-Michel Florin, co-director of the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum, said: "Biodynamic research employs scientific methods and is always open to new approaches. We

need research that not only offers proof but also furthers development and addresses the concrete questions that farmers have".

*Sebastian Jünger / Verena Wahl*

## Connectedness in food

Looking at food from a dynamic point of view means taking account of processes and the effect of forces. This approach enabled an experience of the quality of food for the participants of a 2-day training for the employees of the Italian supplier and retailer EcorNaturaSi. The dynamic approach to food is the basis for regular lectures and workshops.

In the contribution to a conference on the future of our food system (AÖL Demeter Slow Food) the focus was on "connectedness" – making relationships. Entering into a relationship means perceiving, becoming aware, nurturing an encounter – this can be with the food, with the grower or even the feeling of responsibility for the animals whose products we eat.

Relationships in food systems was also the focus of one afternoon of the Agricultural Conference 2019. A food system includes all the processes which contribute to feeding the human being. There is a need to advise small farmers, introduce consumers to craft food production, bring in sustainable topics in cooking lessons in schools and, last but not least, to plant a seed for a healthy future by having pupils help in the day to day work on the farm. The human being forms the centre of the value-added chain if you think of it from the field to the plate to the community at the table.

The annual medical conference at the Goetheanum with the topic "Light acts" included a nutrition workshop on the human being's need for light, given by the nutritional ther-

Research conference 2018: Veronique Chable and Jean-Michel Florin (Photo: Heinrich Heer)

"Apple day" Photo: Charlotte Fischer



apist Ela Wallner. Life arises from the meeting of light and darkness, something that can be demonstrated clearly by the example of photosynthesis. What is more, the last-mentioned is the starting point of all food, so that you can say that we live on the substance of light. The human being needs light for a wide range of things, such as for our bones and for a feeling of well-being.

On World Food Day on 16 October we held a joint event with the Stiftung Freie Gemeinschaftsbank on Eve biting into the apple as a starting point for the future of the earth: because action that takes account of the consequences is the result of eating from the tree of knowledge. There were apples of all kinds at the Apple Day in the Markthalle Basel – apple varieties, apple juice, apple sensorics, tastings of apple products. Jasmin Peschke, with the contribution entitled “an apple a day”, introduced a variety of aspects on the all-rounder apple from mythology, nutrition and dietetics. As a community project with four regional partners the event was a great success.

*Jasmin Peschke*

## **Biodynamic course at Heliopolis University in Cairo, Egypt**

On 8 April 2018 a small group of people gathered in an office at Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development in Cairo, Egypt and discussed the question of how greater depth in the direction of biodynamics could be integrated into the curriculum for the Bachelor degree in ecological agriculture due to start at the university in the autumn. Could one aspect be included in soil science? Could something be said as part of plant breeding? How best to talk about animals? Nothing seemed to really fit. “We will cre-

ate a 2-week course on biodynamic agriculture during each semester!” This suggestion was met with great enthusiasm. And no sooner said than done. Although it was still not clear how – but the world will be created in and with Sekem.

The bachelor course was advertised and started with 22 students in autumn 2018. A small group was formed in the Section and two people were on site from 2 to 12 December 2018 to teach the first module. The spark was lit and the students were enthusiastic. This new way of doing university with European “lecturers” brought a breath of fresh air, both at the university and in Sekem where part of the teaching took place on the farm. The second course starts in mid-April 2019 with the subjects Goethean plant study and landscape development.

Parallel to teaching the students, potential Egyptian teachers are being given instruction in a “train the trainer programme”. An evaluation is also being carried out as to how this process could form the basis for implementing biodynamic courses at universities in other countries. The project is planned to run for four years. Funding is not yet secured and all the costs are being borne in the interim by the two project partners, Heliopolis University and the Section for Agriculture.

*Ueli Hurter*

## **Climate protection through biodynamic agriculture**

From scientific research in the DOK study in Therwil, Switzerland, it is known that biodynamics is the most sustainable form of agriculture. This long-term study has been comparing biodynamic (D), organic (O) and conventional (K) agriculture for 40 years and is jointly run and funded

*Reto Ingold during the course at Heliopolis University*



by the FiBL (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture) and Agroscope, the Swiss government centre of excellence for agricultural research.

In these comparisons biodynamic agriculture is distinguished in particular by the highest organic carbon deposits and therefore the best CO<sup>2</sup> sequestration, the highest microbial diversity in the soil and the lowest nitrous oxide emissions (N<sup>2</sup>O). This means that biodynamic agriculture has the potential to protect the climate on the one hand and to preserve soil fertility on the other, even in times of climate change.

The idea is to scientifically prove this potential in practice as well and so make the resilience of biodynamic agriculture more comprehensible to both the wider public and politicians and officials. An initial project outline was developed along with the FiBL and, after being worked through again, was expanded with all the important aspects of sustainability. Based on the analysis of soil quality and carbon reserves, the project covers a whole-farm sustainability assessment, an economic and environmental impact analysis and a synthesis with the sociopolitical implications.

The project involves high costs. We therefore need a risk assessment with a subsequent review of the project design. A preliminary project with workshops will clarify whether the SMART analysis – Sustainability Monitoring and Assessment Routine – is suitable for this project. Initial assessments are encouraging. The project will take time, but we will persevere. *Ueli Hurter/Susanna Küffer Heer*

## Seed as a cultural asset

Seed is an ongoing topic in the Section. We are working on three strands of this at present: 1. How can biodynamic plant breeding be financed in the long term? We are working with a network for the implementation of the idea of a crop plant pro mille fund. 2. In Demeter vegetable growing, hybrid varieties are frowned on in theory but in practice are widespread: how can we resolve this contradiction? A core group has started work on this. 3. Continuing professional development for breeders: the third professional development week for those working in biodynamic breeding initiatives took place in January 2019. The Section is a partner in this initiative which is organised by the Fund for Crop Plant Development. *Ueli Hurter*

## Economy Council

Sixty people from many European countries came to the inspiring meeting of the Economy Council in Amsterdam in summer 2018. Besides the preparation of the material and ideas for the Agricultural Conference on the topic Land and ECONOMY, the issue of how to fund businesses was an important topic. The case of the investment company Bio Development AG (BD) was presented. From their minority holdings, the BD supports regionally developed organic companies and protects them from being sold to large companies listed on the stock market. However, this has made the BD itself into a major player. The locally-based subsidiary Estafette-Odin was presented and a visit organised. Estafette-Odin integrates the customers as co-owners in the long-term development and therefore belongs to its customers. It therefore has associative support and backing

Research fields, Photo: Charlotte Fischer



and can relate differently to the low-cost suppliers in the organic market.

*Ueli Hurter*

## **Biodynamic viticulture**

The professional group International Biodynamic Viticulture established in February 2018 promotes the international exchange of views and deals with practical questions based on an anthroposophical understanding. Two current topics were raised at the viticulture seminar in February 2019: the topic of the animal quality in the vineyard and the urgent issue of vine vitality and regeneration. Besides networking and exchanging information, the aim for the next few months is to get a better grasp of this question.

*Sarah Sommer*

## **International biodynamic advisory**

In view of the growing biodynamic market and the increased demand for farm conversion, the advisory role is becoming increasingly important. The Section is therefore working in partnership with Demeter International on a development project with the aim of promoting trusted and high quality advisory work. This includes various aspects such as further training courses, a database system and an international quality system for biodynamic advice. The idea was discussed and further developed at the international advisory meeting in February 2019 along with 40 advisers.

*Jean-Michel Florin / Sarah Sommer*

## **The quality of biodynamic olive oil**

In April 2018 Demeter olive oil producers from Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Brazil met in Greece to discuss the topic of oil quality. This included tasting a range of oils in order to learn about the diversity of the taste experience of the olive oil. Over the two days the 25 producers also worked on the following questions: how can we look after the earth and the trees even better? How should biodynamic preparations be used? Which other, specifically biodynamic measures have proved effective?

*Jean-Michel Florin*

## **Other areas of activity**

- Training
- International working group on biodynamic preparations
- International working group on biodynamic fruit production
- International professional group for herbs and medicinal plants
- Landscape development

## **Trips and contacts in 2018**

Egypt, Germany, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovenia, Ukraine, Togo, USA.



## Section for Agriculture

The Section for Agriculture is one of eleven Sections of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. Its main task is to coordinate and give new impulses to the biodynamic movement across the world. Courses, seminars, conferences, lecture tours and publications create points of contact for people who are seeking a deepened anthroposophical/spiritual scientific understanding of agriculture. Encouragement to become responsible for one's own activity is especially important in agriculture and horticulture, in food processing, trade, nutrition, inner work and in public relations. An active worldwide network of individuals and associations, Demeter businesses, research establishments, trusts etc. are encouraged and developed.

The Section is led by Jean-Michel Florin and Ueli Hurter. The team running the Section is currently made up of eight people. Other co-workers are also involved with specific projects. The Council of Representatives which represents the biodynamic movement in its regional and profession-

al diversity, currently includes 70 people from 18 different countries.

The Section is built financially on four pillars. The following income was received for the 2018/2019 operational year:

	<b>2018/2019</b>	<b>2017/2018</b>
Free gifts	CHF 149,000.00	162,000.00
Project grants	CHF 145,000.00	161,000.00
Income from events	CHF 332,000.00	253,000.00
Goetheanum*	CHF 130,000.00	94,000.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>CHF 757,000.00</b>	<b>670,000.00</b>

\* Annual basic contribution by the General Anthroposophical Society from donations and members' contributions

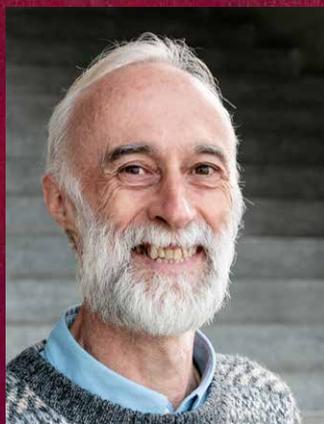
## Donations

You may also wish to offer financial support. Bank details can be found at: [www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/donations](http://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/donations)

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Photos: François Bonhôte



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**Verena Wahl**  
Team and Project Coordination